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**THE REV. HERCULE BRASSAC**  
**EUROPEAN VICAR GENERAL OF THE AMERICAN BISHOPS**  
(1839-1861)

The following biographical sketch needs an apology. It is not a narrative on strictly scientific lines, such as would dignify an historical review, but rather a *causerie d'histoire*, told as in a circle of interested friends. The subject is, however, an interesting one for the American Catholic historian.<sup>1</sup>

In a previous issue of the *Catholic Historical Review*,<sup>2</sup> I called attention to a letter, dated Paris, December 27, 1842, from Canon Adalbert Inama, one of the pioneer priests of Wisconsin, in which he describes his journey from Munich to Paris. "On the evening of the eighteenth," he says, "we got out of the *diligence* in the most crowded part of this fairy town near the Tuileries. My travelling companion, a Bavarian missionary, and myself, had been directed by the Munich Missionary Society<sup>3</sup> to Mr. Brassac, Vicar General in Europe of the American Bishops. He directed us to a pension, where we were splendidly housed." In this same letter Canon Inama writes: "Vicar General Brassac tries repeatedly to engage me for Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati." Another notice of Father Brassac is to be found in the *Berichte der Leopoldinen Stiftung* for 1839,<sup>4</sup> where a footnote says that in December, 1838, Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati arrived in Vienna with "his Vicar General, Mr. Brassac," and that from there they went to Rome.

My curiosity was aroused by these statements. I wanted to know more about this "European Vicar General of the American Bishops" at that early period of the Catholic Church in the United States. In spite of my researches, I regret to state that a full and well-connected biography of Father Brassac cannot be given. Judging from my correspondence with Catholic historical scholars, Father Brassac appears to be almost unknown. Yet, from the following data, it would seem that his personal character

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<sup>1</sup> The principal archival sources used for this article will be found in the Department of DOCUMENTS in this issue, pp. 448-470.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii (1915-1916), p. 186.

<sup>3</sup> The Ludwig Missions Verein, founded at Munich, in 1839.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. xii, p. 60.

and his work for the early church of America are deserving of lasting recognition.

It is now one hundred years since Brassac, as a young seminarian, set out from France for the Catholic missions of Louisiana, which then embraced almost all of the present ecclesiastical provinces of New Orleans and St. Louis, excepting Texas, and all the west shore of the Mississippi from New Orleans to Dubuque. Brassac spent fourteen years of active pioneer life on these Louisiana missions. His letters which are still preserved in the Archives of St. Louis and Cincinnati, breathe the spirit of sincere piety, a strong confidence in God, a loyal submission to ecclesiastical authority, a generous Christian charity, and a deep affection for his personal friends. The many changes in his missionary activities might seem to point to a somewhat restless disposition. But we must remember that these early pioneers had to go from place to place, wherever the call for work was most urgent, though the distances were appalling. They were amazing travelers, though not of the class to whom the old ditty points: *Qui multum peregrinantur, raro sanctificantur, propter decanter*, but holy self-sacrificing men, suffering hunger and thirst, fatigue and hardship, to gain immortal souls.

Let us now examine some of the printed sources for a biographical sketch of Father Brassac.

In the *United States Catholic Almanac* are the following entries, all under the Diocese of New Orleans:

1834, Baton Rouge, St. Joseph's, Rev. H. Brassac.

Baton Rouge, W. *twice a month*, Rev. H. Brassac.

Baton Rouge, E. St. John's, Rev. H. Brassac.

1835, 1836, 1837, Donaldsonville, *The Ascension*, Rev. H. Brassac.

1838, Donaldsonville, *The Ascension*, Rev. H. Brassac.

In the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*,<sup>5</sup> the Lazarist Father Tichitoli,<sup>6</sup> describes the celebration which took place

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<sup>5</sup>Vol. i, March, 1825, pp. 35ff.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph Tichitoli, a subdeacon, embarked with Fathers Andreis and Rosati, Lazarists, at Bordeaux, June 12, 1916, and landed at Baltimore on July 26th. From there the party went to St. Thomas Seminary, Bardstown, and stayed there with Bishop Flaget, until Bishop Du Bourg returned with his party from France. Rev. Father David, later Coadjutor to Bishop Flaget, then Rector of the Seminary, engaged Father Andreis to teach theology. In 1818, Rosati, moved with the whole Seminary, Brassac among them, to the *Barrens* near St. Louis. All this time Father

on March 10, 1824, when Bishop Du Bourg consecrated his auxiliary, Bishop Rosati, in the Church of the Ascension, Donaldsonville, La. Speaking of the priests who participated in these ceremonies, he stated that: "*M. Brassac remplissait les fonctions de grand-maitre des cérémonies.*" In Vol. II., p. 386, the same *Annales* contain a letter from Father Brassac, then pastor of Donaldsonville, addressed to Bishop Du Bourg, his Ordinary, and dated Donaldsonville, April 30, 1825. The editor says of it: "Mr. Brassac's letter is a report of the exercises of Holy Week in his parish. The edifying details given prove that the labors of the missionaries are not fruitless and that if these men have their hardships, they also have their consolations." This letter was undoubtedly sent to the *Annales* by Bishop Du Bourg, probably in order to let the Catholics of France see that their contributions to the American missions were not only much needed, but also well applied. The letter is a clear indication of the priestly character and zeal of Father Brassac, as well as an honorable testimony to the great piety of the early Louisiana settlers.

Other interesting notices of Father Brassac are found in the *Records* of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia. On page 464, of volume X (1899), there is a letter of Bishop Du Bourg which gives us what is probably the first regular appointment of Father Brassac. It is addressed to Charles Smith, Esq., Opelousas, and reads as follows:

St. Louis, April 29, 1819.

DEAR SIR:

By the first steamboat, the Rev. M. Brassac will go down. He will stop at La Fourche, whence he will take his way thro' St. Martinsville to your house. I have thought best to defer the departure of his lay companion, both to avoid throwing at once on you so much burden and expense, and to give Mr. Brassac time to get acquainted with the localities. I have no doubt he will by his zeal, prudence, meekness, instruction and amiable manner give general satisfaction.

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Andreis was Superior of the Lazarist and Vicar General of Louisiana. In his *Life*, p. 201, we find the following: "Father De Andreis hoped that his novices would one day be able to share his numerous duties; but this expectation proved vain. Mr. Tichitoli fell sick, his lungs became so weak, that it was feared he would soon die of consumption. The physicians declared that he would not live long, unless he immediately left the climate of Missouri, where the cold of winter is extreme. It was therefore, judged expedient to send him to a milder region in the southern part of

Enclosed I send the bill of sundry articles for yr. church, as per request. There are a few wanting which I could not spare, such as a ciborium, candlesticks, Processional Cross, altar cloths, censer, cruets, and choir books. He will shift as well as he can, till you are able to procure them. I suppose that in the beginning he will put up at yr. house. I wish however that he be as soon as possible accommodated in his own, in which I foresee he will, at the first onset, be obliged to have recourse to yr. kindness for several indispensable things, such as a horse equipped, a housekeeper, linens, etc. I must rely for all this on your attention and that of Mrs. Smith, to whom I earnestly recommend him, and offer my best respects.

With the highest regard and attachment to you and yr. Brothers,  
I remain,

Dr. Sir

Your most hum. servt.

✱ L. Wm., *Bishop of La.*

On page 343, of volume IX (1898), of the *Records*, it is stated that the Rev. Brassac was the first pastor of St. Charles parish of Grand Coteau, from 1819 to 1822. The following documents were translated for the *Records* by the Rev. C. M. Widman, S.J.

*Burial of Ch. Smith (1819)*

In the year of O. L. 1819, was solemnly buried in the Church of St. Charles Borromeo, on the epistle side near the sanctuary, Charles Smith, born in Frederick County, State of Maryland, in the year 1756, who died suddenly on the first day of April, 1819, on his plantation in Opelousas, State of La. The funeral, attended by an immense multitude of all ranks, was performed by Rev. Flav. H. Rosti, Rector of St. Landry's Church, Opelousas. To the munificence of this respectable gentleman and his pious widow, Mary Sentee, the public is indebted for the elegant church and dependences in the prairie of Grand Coteau. May he enjoy in Heaven that happiness which his exemplary life deserved, and may the memory of their virtues be held in the respect and gratitude of future generations. Solemn funeral services were performed April 1, 1819, by the Rector of St. Charles; on October 23d, 1820, by Rev. F. Isabey, Rector of St. Martinsville, and on March 8, 1823, by the Right Rev. Louis W. Du Bourg, Bishop of Louisiana and the Floridas.

Hc. Brassac, Rect. of St. Charles.

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Louisiana, and, as he had already completed his entire course of theology, Bishop Du Bourg promoted him to the priesthood, and sent him to Donaldsonville, in 1819, in order that he might exercise the holy ministry under the direction of Rev. Father Joseph Bigeschi, the excellent pastor of that place. In March, 1827, Tichitoli who succeeded Brassac, became rector of Donaldsonville where he died in 1833. He was in turn succeeded by Father Brassac in 1833.

*Dedication of St. Charles Church, Grand Coteau, La.*

In the year of O. L. 1820, on October 23d, I, Fr. Gabriel Isabey, O.P., Parish priest of St. Martin's Church, in the County of Attakapas, by delegation of the RR. Louis Valentin Du Bourg, Bishop of St. Louis, and with the assistance of the RR. FF. Flavius Rosti and Hercule Brassac, parish priests respectively of St. Landry and St. Charles, in Opelousas County, have blessed the Church of Grand Coteau, and given it the title of St. Charles Borromeo, after the name of the founder of said Church, the late Charles Smith. In testimony whereof, I have subscribed together with the said RR. gentlemen, on the day and in the year as above.

FLAVIUS H. ROSTI, *Rect. of St. Landry.*

HLE. BRASSAC, *Rect. of St. Charles.*

GABR. ISABEY, *as above.*

On the same day after the ceremony, and in virtue of the canonical appointment, by a letter addressed to the Rev. Hle. Brassac by the RR. Bishop, I have introduced the said H. Brassac into possession, real and actual, of the newly erected parish with the usual formalities.

*Appointment of the First Pastor*

*Louis W. Dubourg, by the Mercy of God and the Authority of the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of St. Louis, U. S. A., to all whom it may concern greeting and blessing in Jesus Our Lord.*

We grant and confer on our beloved Master (Magister) Herc. Brassac, priest of our diocese, the care of the newly erected Church of St. Charles Borromeo, in the county of Opelousas, State of La., and hereby invest him with all the rights and belongings, under the condition that he reside there permanently and observe the statutes of the diocese.

To this effect we, by the present letter,<sup>7</sup> empower the Rev. F. Gabr. Isabey, Rector of St. Martin's, Attakapas, to place and introduce the said Herc. Brassac into possession, real and actual, of all rights and belongings of said Church, in the usual form.

Given at St. Louis, Mo., under our hand and seal and with the subscription of our Vic. Gen. April 29, 1821.

\* LOUIS W. DU BOURG, *of St. Louis.*

GABR. ISABEY, *Episcopal Commissary.*

*First Pastoral Visit of Bishop Du Bourg*

On March 10th, I, the undersigned, Bishop of Louisiana and the Floridas, have completed the canonical visit of the parish lately established under the name of St. Charles Borromeo, in the locality called Grand Coteau.

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<sup>7</sup> Is this the same letter addressed to the Rev. Hle. Brassac by the Right Rev. Bishop mentioned at the end of the foregoing document? If so, the date should be April 29, 1820 (not 1821). If not the same letter, what canonical reason can there have been for ordering a second installation half a year after the first?

County of Opelousas, State of La. The church and presbytery have been built by the late Ch. Smith, a resident of this place, who has added hereunto 80 arpents of prairie and 50 of woodland to provide for the support of the worship, and besides has supplied the necessary vestments, linen and ornamentation not only for the decency, but also for the splendor of the religious rites. The property has been turned over to the Bishop by an act dated (*date wanting*) and signed by the widow and the heirs of the former, who died April 1st, before he could finish the pious work. Happily, his widow, Mrs. Mary S. Smith, has spared neither pains nor expenses to carry out the intentions of her worthy husband . . . She has added to the bequest of her husband a donation of about 400 arpents, adjoining the church land, to establish a girls' school and is actually engaged in building, inclosing and furnishing a two-story building. She has promised, moreover, to provide for the traveling expenses of 4 nuns, who are to come from France, and to support them for the first year. This institution established in a locality already well-peopled and far distant from any similar institution, promises great advantages for the future and will secure for the pious founders the gratitude of future generations.<sup>8</sup> I have established the boundaries of the new parish as follows . . . I entreat the Rev. Pastor to establish as soon as possible Mission Stations in various localities, where the faithful may from time to time hear Mass and receive instruction. I also recommend him to teach Catechism frequently in these distant places. I have conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation in this church on eighty-three adults, whom I found as well prepared as can be expected under the circumstances . . . These are good beginnings, for which I am happy to express my satisfaction to the Rev. Pastor.

Done in the presbytery of St. Charles, Grand Coteau, etc., on date as above.

✱ *L. C., Ev. de la Louisiane.*

Louis Sibourd, *Vic. Gen.*

Herc. Brassac, *Curé.*

Marcel Borella, *Prêtre.*

Ant. Richefort, *Sec. ad hoc.*

The same *Records* relate Father Brassac's connection with the coming of the Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur to Cincinnati in 1840. He is also mentioned in the *Erinnerungen aus meinen Leben* by Archbishop Heiss of Milwaukee, who tells us that on his first journey to America as a young priest, he arrived in

<sup>8</sup> The Ladies of the Sacred Heart founded their second American establishment at Grand Coteau, Opelousas, La. They owe it to Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Smith (U. S. C. H. Soc. *Records and Studies*, Vol. ii, 1901, p. 349). Bishop Rosati in a letter of June 7, 1827 (*Annales*, Vol. ii, p. 408) complains that the convent at Grand Coteau had only seven sisters and thirty-five boarders. Twelve years later according to the *Almanac* of 1840, the convent had twenty-one religious and one hundred boarders.

Paris where he found another German priest from **Silesia**, Rev. Wm. Schonat. Both had been directed by the court chaplain of Munich, Rev. Dr. Mueller, manager of the Ludwig Missions Verein, who is often mentioned in Brassac's letters, to the Abbé Brassac for their transportation. The Abbé was away, but was expected back in a few days. They stopped at a place in the Rue de Fer, where only priests and Catholic laymen were lodged. This may have been later the place of Brassac's American Agency, since some of his letters are dated from that street. Dr. Heiss says: "Towards the end of the month, Abbé Brassac had secured a place for us and for two other missionaries on the steamer, *Ville de Paris*. These two traveling companions were Fathers Garahan and Chalons of Mobile, Alabama, who had journeyed together to Europe. . . . Besides us four priests, there were five other cabin passengers, all of French descent, and therefore Catholics, namely, a young man from New Orleans who had studied at the Collège Henry IV. His parents now lived at Boston. Then a merchant of New Orleans, and lastly a lawyer from the same place by the name of Soulier, with his wife and a maid.<sup>9</sup> They sailed from Havre on November 3, 1842."

From Baunard's *Life of Madame Duchesne*, the following items have been gathered:

On August 25, 1821, Madame Eugenie Audé and Sister **Mary Layton** arrived at St. Charles on the Grand Coteau to establish there a foundation of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart. They found there "Mr. Brassac, the Curé, who also served the parish of Alexandria, 80 miles further north, those of St. Martinsville and Vermillionville to the South, and of Bayou Chicot to the West." A short time after Madame Audé was attacked by a dangerous fever and felt her death approaching. So she asked Rev. Brassac to bring her Holy Communion, confident that the Lord would cure her. The fever left the same day and the next day she was as strong as before her illness.

During the sickness of Madame Audé, Madame Duchesne, the provincial superior, wrote to Brassac from Fleurissant, Mo., and received from him comforting assurances. When troubles of various kinds arose, the Sisters found a faithful help and protector in Rev. Brassac. Another time he writes to Madame Duchesne: "Mrs. Smith appreciates fully the treasure for which she is indebted to your foresight, and her most ardent prayers are addressed to Heaven for a blessing on

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<sup>9</sup> See Brassac's letters of October 26th and November 26, 1842, on pp. 466-467 of this issue.



the works and plans of your dear Sister. The parents of the children under her care are all unanimous in their expressions of satisfaction, and I have no doubt the school will succeed admirably. There have been difficulties at first, and there may be still some to overcome. But was there ever an undertaking for the glory of God which did not meet with obstacles?"

The very latest reference to Father Brassac is to be found in that fine work, the *History of Mother Seton's Daughters*, by Sister Mary Agnes McCann, where two letters of Father Brassac to Bishop Purcell are given in full.<sup>10</sup>

Having so far gathered notices of Father Brassac from the printed records in our possession, we will now examine some interesting data from manuscript sources. For these I am deeply obliged and grateful to my kind correspondents, the Very Rev. F. L. Gassler, Vicar General of New Orleans, the Rev. Dr. Souvay, C.M., Professor at Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., and Rev. Charles van Tourenhout, Rector of St. Genevieve, Mo.

Father Gassler has compiled the following notes from a list of priests written by Bishop Blanc of New Orleans, some eighty years ago.

Rev. Hercule Brassac came to America with Bishop Du Bourg and formed part of the company of twenty-two priests, three brothers, and six Flemish young men who left France on July 1, 1817. By order of King Louis XVIII, they were given free transportation on the government vessel *La Caravane*. The party arrived at Annapolis on the 4th of September. However, due to lack of transportation, they could not resume their journey until November. They passed through Kentucky, and in the first days of December they arrived at Bishop Flaget's place of residence (which is not given in Blanc's account of the journey, but which must have been Bardstown).<sup>11</sup> I find the first mention of Brassac's name as Curé of the parish of St. James, Cantirel, as follows: "Paroisse St. Jacques, Curé M. Brassac."<sup>12</sup> St. Jacques is situated now, as in Brassac's time, on the west bank of the Mississippi, about 50 miles from New Orleans.

In 1820, we find him as Curé de St. Charles, Opelousas. From 1823 to 1826, he was Rector of Donaldsonville, Paroisse de l'Ascension, where his name appears as "Curé, le Rev. H. Brassac." From 1832 to 1833, he was at St. Joseph's, Baton Rouge.

<sup>10</sup> Vol. i, pp. 285ff. New York, 1917.

<sup>11</sup> This conjecture corresponds with two reports of Du Bourg's journey as printed in the *Annales*, Vol. i, No. 1, (1821), p. 22ff, and Vol. ii, pp. 333ff.

<sup>12</sup> This ought to be 1819. Brassac may have resided at St. Jacques until he was installed at St. Charles, Grand Coteau, in October, 1820.

In my private notes taken there in 1912, I find that Brassac's first entry in the baptismal records appears on March 19, 1832, and his last entry August 15, 1833. However, he never signed as Rector of Baton Rouge, but as Curé de l' Ascension. This may be explained by the circumstance that Brassac was again Rector of Donaldsonville from March, 1833 to 1837. In Bishop Blanc's list there finally appears on the margin the remark: "Brassac parti en avril 1837." I came across his name again when he is mentioned as one of the priests who assisted at Bishop's Blanc's consecration November 22, 1835, at New Orleans.

Rev. Dr. Souvay furnishes many valuable notes by Bishop Rosati, from which the following are selected:

Here is, in the first place, a note written in Bishop Rosati's own hand, possibly about 1824-25. "Hercule Brassac né à . . . <sup>13</sup> dans le Diocèse de Mende en France, parti de Bordeaux pour l' Amérique avec Mgr. Du Bourg le 17 Juin 1817. Arriva à S. Thomas au Kentucky dans le mois de Decembre de la même année, y etudis la Theologie sous Mr. Rosati; il avait été minoré, et ordonné soudiacre à Baltimore. Il parti du Kentucky avec les autres et se rendit aux Barrens où il fut ordonné Diacre; il en parti pour S. Genevieve, où il fut ordonné prêtre.<sup>14</sup> Apres avoir demeuré quelque temps dans l'état des Illinois,<sup>15</sup> à 8 milles de Harrisonville, où il commenca à exercer le ministère, il fut envoyé aux Opelouses, Curé."

In Rosati's *Diary* are the following entries concerning Father Brassac:

1824.

Mart. 9 Postridie ad multam noctem navim reliqui et prope Donnaldsonem ad terram applicavi. Ibi a D. Brassac hospitio exceptus biduum.

11 egi. . . et ab eodem D. Brassac comitatus ad episcopum perrexi, quem apud nepotem novem ad Ascensionis Ecclesiae Milliariis ad sinistram fluminis, Neo-Aurelia revertentem excepimus.

Ibidem ejus societate et colloquiis biduo fruitus, et ab eo comitatus Donnaldsonem reversus sum. Sequenti die, divino officio persoluto,

14 a Domino Brassac ad Assumptionis parochiam

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<sup>13</sup> In all probability Marvéjols of the Diocese of Mende in the Department of Lozère in Southern France, of which Mende is the capital. It is a small town of 5,000 inhabitants situated on the River Colagne, about 12 miles from Mende, with some industries and tanneries. A number of Brassac's letters are written from Marvéjols, the home of his father.

<sup>14</sup> On November 1, 1818.

<sup>15</sup> It is strange that Bishop Du Bourg of St. Louis should send Brassac into Illinois, which then belonged to the Diocese of Vincennes; but this may be explained in the *Annales*, Vol. i, No. 2, p. 40, where a footnote says that the Illinois missions, being too remote from Bardstown, were administered by Bishop Du Bourg then residing at St. Louis which was so much nearer these missions. See also CLARKE, *Lives of the Deceased Bishops*, Vol. i, p. 224.

deductus fui, et D. Bigeschi Parochi hospitio  
usus, apud eum sacro secessui vacavi per  
aliquot dies.

Rosati's consecration took place in Father Brassac's church on March 25th; the place and date had been assigned by Bishop Du Bourg as most convenient for the priests. A few days later, we find the following entries:

- 30 Iter suscepi D. Cellini,<sup>16</sup> qui in parochia S. Caroli Oppelousas morabatur, invisendi gratia, R. D. Brassac comite. Prandimus apud D. Narcissum Landri, et coenavimus apud Theodorum Zachariam.
- 31 Sequenti die in Diversorio Desabris ad Plaqueminam prandimus. Vespere autem ad navim prevenimus. Noctem in diversorio
- April 1 egimus. Postridie navim conscendimus, et aquas omnes quae Accatapas ab inferiori parte Luisianae dividunt transfretavimus. Igitur hora post meridiem quarta, navi relicta, equos ascendimus et reliquum itineris quatuor horis confecimus. Nam hora octava, ad Viduam Smith pervenimus. Ibi caenantes reperimus D. Cellini, et Rossi, quos amplexatus, ad caenam cum ipsis recubui.

A few days later Bishop Rosati went to New Orleans, and on his way back from there stopped again at Donaldsonville.

- Maii 1 Sub vesperam Donaldsonen perveni.
- 2 Missa in Ecclesia Ascensionis.  
Sacro peracto, fluvium cum D. Brassae trajeci,  
et vespere ad D. Bringier.

The next items of information furnished by the *Diary* are mere mentions of letters received from, or written to, Father Brassac:

- Julii 29 Litteras D. Brassac tradendas dedi (to Father De Neckere and Potini, who were leaving for Louisiana).
- Sept. 14 Litteras scripsi ad Illm. et Revmum. Emp. Neo-Aurel. . . . ut illum rogarem ut huic regioni prospiceret, et D. Brassac remitteret.
- 1825.
- Mart. 21 Litteras accepi. . . . D. Brassac.

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<sup>16</sup> The Rev. V. F. Cellini had been a practicing physician at Rome, Italy, and later became a priest. He resigned the benefice he had there and came to America where he entered the novitiate of the Lazarists under Father Andreis on the eve of Epiphany, 1819. He devoted all his years to the Diocese of St. Louis. Bishop Kenrick in November, 1846, made him his Vicar General. Cellini died in St. Louis, January 6, 1849.

Nov. 8 Scripsi ad D. Brassac.

Nov. 27 Scripsi ad D. Brassac.

On June 26, 1826, Bishop Rosati came to Donaldsonville, "ubi a D. De Angelis excepti . . ." The *Diary* makes no mention of Father Brassac. The Episcopal Visitation of the Diocese of New Orleans was made from December, 1827, to April, 1828. The *Diary* mentions the names of the pastors and assistants in every place; but nowhere does the name of Father Brassac appear.

From the minutes of the deliberation of the Board of Trustees of the Parish of the Ascension, Donaldsonville, La., the following facts are gleaned:

a. After the death of Father Tichitoli, C.M., Pastor of that parish from 1827 to 1833, the parish was administered by Father Beauprez from March 1 to August 15, 1833.

b. On September 3, 1833, an inventory was taken of all things belonging to the Rectory; this inventory is signed by "H. Brassac, Curé."

c. On April 25, 1837, the Board of Trustees audited and approved the accounts of Father Brassac's administration, and added to the minutes the following entry:

Resolu à l'unanimité par les Marguilliers séculiers, tous présents, que nous approuvons l'administration de notre Eglise, par notre Curé le Reverend Hercule Brassac, pendant tout le temps qu'il l'a desservie, que sa conduite a toujours été la plus exemplaire, qu'il a tous droits possibles à notre estime et à notre respect, et qu'il emporte, en nous laissant, nos regrets les plus sincères.

Edward Duffel,	P. J. Dannequin,
Alexandre Braud,	E. Gaudin,
Narcisse Landry,	Joseph Blanchard.

d. The next entry is also worth recording here. A note in the margin of the book, written by a later hand, gives the date March 24, 1838.

Nous les Marguilliers, nous étant constitués en assemblée, délibérons comme suit

Il est résolu, et il nous est agréable de transcrire sur le registre de nos délibérations, la lettre pleine d'amour et d'affection, que nous adressa le Rev<sup>d</sup> Curé Hercule Brassac à moment de son départ; et c'est avec la plus haute considération que nous lui donnons place dans notre journal.

Nouvel Orléans le 30 Avril 1836.

Messieurs les Marguilliers  
de L'Eglise de L'Ascension.  
Messieurs,

Au moment de ma pénible séparation d'avec vous, je me trouvois trop oppressé pour pouvoir vous exprimer les

sentiments qui agitaient mon âme, et qui ont gravé dans mon cœur d'une manière ineffaçable le souvenir de cet instant si douloureux pour moi. Non! je n'oublierai jamais, la douce et généreuse Coopération que j'ai trouvée en vous pendant le temps que j'ai été chargé de l'administration de votre excellente paroisse, et de l'indulgence que vous avez montré pour moi dans toutes les occasions. C'est pour moi je vous assure, Messieurs, une consolation bien grande et que je dois spécialement à votre générosité, de penser que pendant tout le temps que j'ai été Curé de l'Ascension il n'y a eu entre nous, aucune aigreur, aucune pique et qu'au contraire il a toujours existé entre nous, une harmonie et un Concert de mesures et d'actions, auquel nous devons d'avoir retiré l'Eglise de dettes immenses qui l'accablaient il y a quelques années, et qui a été cause du peu de bien que mon ministère a pu causer parmi le troupeau des fideles de l'Ascension. Je vous prie Messieurs de recevoir ici, le juste tribut de mon estime et de mon admiration pour le zèle, désintéressé et fervent que vous avez toujours déployé pour le bien et la prospérité de l'Eglise confiée à votre sollicitude, aussi bien que pour la pureté d'intention qui vous a guidé dans toutes vos démarches et vos résolutions officielles; permettez moi d'y ajouter encore celui de ma reconnaissance profonde et bien sincère pour toutes les bontés que vous m'avez prodigué individuellement et collectivement et avec laquelle je suis et serai toujours très respectueusement.

Messieurs, Votre très humble obéissant serviteur  
et ami bien sincère

(Signé) Hle. Brassac

Ancien Curé de l'Ascension.

Messrs: Narcisse Landry

Edward Duffel

Joseph Blanchard

Alexandre Braud

Edouard Gaudin

P. G. Dannequin

Marguilliers de l'Ascension

*Pour copie conforme*

P. G. Dannequin,

*Secret*

Dr. Souvay has in his keeping seventeen letters from Father Brassac written to his friend Rosati. Some of these give such a full picture of Brassac's priestly character, that I give them in full, while from others interesting extracts will be culled, in another part of this present issue of the *Review*.

Father van Tourenhaot, Rector of Ste. Genevieve, writes:

"I have found some traces of Father Hercule Brassac. He performed three baptisms in Ste. Genevieve, during the month of November, 1818. His name is not found in the marriage register nor in the book of the *enterrements*. For curiosity sake I send you a copy of his first three baptisms. I consulted the baptismal registers of the parish of Kaskaskia, which are kept in the Jesuit College in St. Louis. He was at Kaskaskia from April or May, 1822, until April, 1823.<sup>17</sup> During this time he administered baptism to twenty-five children. For his first baptism he omitted the date of the month; the second was in August, 1822. Here are the three interesting records; the last of a slave:

Le sept Novembre, mil huit cent dix huit, nous prêtre soussigné  
avons baptisé Marie Eloise, née le trente Octobre du légitime  
mariage de Baptiste, marraine Marie Eloise Dequire.

Aucun n'a su signer.

Hle. Brassac,

*Prêtre.*

Le huit Novembre, mil huit cent dix huit, nous prêtre soussigné  
avons baptisé Louis Sauveur, né le trois du mois ci-dessus du  
légitime mariage de Jean Bequette et de Louis Henry-Parraïn:  
Henry Pratte; marraine: Eulalie Pratte, qui ont signe avec moi.

Hle. Brassac,

*Prêtre.*

Le huit Novembre, mil huit cent dix huit, nous prêtre soussigné  
avons baptisé Emelie, esclave à M. Bogy-Parraïn-André, mula-  
tre; marraine Marie Madeline, negresse, qui n'ont su signer,

Hle. Brassac.

*Prêtre.*

From the data thus far furnished by these valuable sources, we can easily follow Brassac's activities from his ordination in the year 1818 until 1826. For a short time in the winter of 1818, he exercised the ministry in the neighborhood of St. Louis. But in May, 1819, he left for Louisiana. According to Bishop Blanc's notes he took charge of the Church of St. Jacques. But in his letter to Father Rosati, June 20, 1820, he states that he came to

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<sup>17</sup> Monsignor Tannrath, the present Chancellor of St. Louis, states that in 1822 Rev. Hercules Brassoek (*viz.* Brassac) was at Drury, Ill. (*Cath. Enycl.* xiii, p. 359.) Drury was the name of a family. This is evident from an entry in Rosati's *Diary*: 1824. September 23d. Ex Prairie (du Rocher) ad D. Drury iter fecimus; apud hunc prandimus. . . Vespere ad D. James pervenimus quarto ab Harrisonville milliario. This is the same Drury whom Brassac mentioned six years before in his letter to Father Rosati, November 15, 1818. If Brassac resided at Drury's, it must have been before he went to Kaskaskia. Did he visit it as a mission from Kaskaskia? According to the list of the early priests officiating at this place, given to the *U. S. Catholic Historical Magazine*, Vol. iv (1891), p. 43, Brassac was there from 1822 to 1824 and was succeeded by Father Cellini, as mentioned above.

St. Charles, Opelousas, on June 1, 1819. He was pastor there till the spring of 1822. For, as Rev. A. M. Fontan, S.J., pastor of St. Charles, writes to me: "His signature appears on the Baptismal Register under date of May 15, 1822, for the last time, appended to a document drawn up by the bishop who had come to change the parish limits in view of erecting the new parish of St. John's, Vermillion. Said document reads thus: 'En foi de quoi J'ai signé en presence du Rev. Abbé Brassac, ci-devant curé de St. Charles, et du Rév. S. Valezano, curé actuel.'

✱ L. G., *Ev. de Louisiane.*

S. Valezano, *Curé.*

H. Brassac, *Missionary.*' "

From St. Charles, Brassac must have returned to Missouri, going to Kaskaskia, where he remained until April, 1823. At this time business called him back to Opelousas. It is a question whether he returned to Missouri or stayed in Louisiana. In a letter to Father Rosati, dated Pointe Coupée, La., July 23, 1823, Rev. A. Blanc (later Archbishop of New Orleans) says that he had written to his brother, J. B. Blanc, rector of Natchitoches, who had asked him for help, "apply to my friends, among them Rev. Brassac, who was then in your neighborhood, and who has several times promised to help." Towards the end of 1823 Brassac was sent to Donaldsonville, as appears from the notes of Bishop Blanc and from a letter of Father Janvier, dated Donaldsonville, November 11, 1823, where he states that there is \$147 due to the seminary which sum is to be collected from the people. "Some, probably, will give something; others nothing at all, others will promise to pay after the harvest. But as I shall leave this parish to get some rest, as the Bishop of New Orleans says, it will be impossible for me to pay that money. But if you write to Mr. Brassac, who is to replace me here, that he should take care of the matter, I believe you will do very well." Unfortunately, the good man proved a false prophet, as we know from Brassac's letter of January 26, 1824. Brassac was at Donaldsonville until 1826, when he disappears from us without further notice. But the trustees of the Ascension Church at Donaldsonville told us a little while ago that he was back there again in 1833 and remained with them until 1837.

Where did he spend the six years between 1826 and 1832? From the total absence of all trace so far in American records, printed or unprinted, I am inclined to think that Brassac spent all this time in France caring for his old father and his sister. It is true, the request, above mentioned, made by Rosati in September, 1824, that Bishop Du Bourg sent Father Brassac back to the St. Louis district, may have been granted.<sup>18</sup> But if so, why is no mention of Brassac to be found in the parish records of that time and territory? My surmise is confirmed by the following item from the Archives of the Propaganda at Rome, furnished me by Rev. Dr. Souvay:

Parisiis (in Gallia) die 15 Novembris 1826. Litt. ad Secret. S.  
Cong. de Prop. Fide; postulat ut Revdo Herculi Brassac sit permissum  
visitare suum patrem senem qui morte perdidit uxorem et 10 liberos.

Auct. ✱ L. Guil. (Du Bourg), *Ev. de Montauban*.

From this it would appear that Bishop Du Bourg asked for a leave of absence for Father Brassac, which Rome undoubtedly granted. The next question then arises: When and from where did Brassac sail for France? From Bishop Rosati's *Diary*, it is plain that in the summer of 1826 Brassac was no longer at Donaldsonville. In November of the same year, Bishop Du Bourg, then already at Montauban, a suffragan See of Toulouse, asked Rome for a leave of absence for Brassac, now no longer his ecclesiastical subject. It is hard to explain this canonical anomaly. I strongly suspect that Brassac had come with Du Bourg in 1817. and again had accompanied him when this apostolic prelate, whom he always considered his spiritual father, left New Orleans for France sailing from New York on June 1, 1826. Du Bourg was still Bishop of New Orleans at the time, and might take any one of his priests with him as traveling companion. But when his resignation of the See of New Orleans was accepted and when he was appointed Bishop of Montauban

<sup>18</sup> The reason why Bishop Rosati would apply to Bishop Du Bourg for the loan of Brassac, is found in a letter of Father Odin, dated August 2, 1823, and published in the *Annales*, Vol. i, No. 5, p. 72, where he complains that: "Bishop Du Bourg sends nearly all his priests to Lower Louisiana. It is sad to see how many congregations are abandoned in Upper Louisiana. We are only six priests in all Upper Louisiana. . . . Natches, New Madrid, Cape Girardeau, Kaskaskias, St. Michel, the Portage, St. Charles and many small places are entirely given up. . . . We had the misfortune of seeing several missionaries return to Europe. Their departure leaves a great void in our missions."



in October, 1826, never to return to America again, then Brassac, not knowing what would be the future developments of the Diocese of New Orleans, St. Louis having at this same time been made a separate See with Rosati as bishop, might well have conceived the idea of spending a longer time in France. What more natural than to ask his former bishop to get him from Rome the needed leave of absence?<sup>19</sup>

Brassac did not intend to stay in Europe longer than one year. From a letter of Rev. A. Blanc to Bishop Rosati, then Administrator of New Orleans, dated June 11, 1827, we learn that the people of Donaldsonville expected Brassac to return soon. He says that the people at Donaldsonville wish to see Brassac back in their parish; but he fears, "that, as Rev. Tichitoli may not willingly give up the place, there may be trouble, much against Brassac's intentions." Brassac himself in a letter written to Bishop Rosati from Baton Rouge, June 25, 1832, speaks of a misunderstanding on the part of Rosati caused by Msgr. Du Bourg, who has forgotten to notify Rosati that he had given Brassac a leave of absence in France "per 12 menses." He says that he arrived in France on July 18, 1826, and intended to leave again in June next "as you could see from the letter of farewell sent me by my father." From this we may infer that Brassac had actually taken farewell of his father and sister to return to America. What the causes were that changed his mind and made him remain in France for fully five years more, we do not know. But as is evident from his letters, he did return in the autumn of 1831. In January, 1832, he left Louisville for Louisiana where we find him again at Baton Rouge. A. Blanc, on April 23, 1832, writes to Bishop Rosati from New Orleans: "L'abbé Lethorte is at Pointe Coupée, who succeeded me at Baton Rouge, and is himself replaced by Mr. Brassac. Both are doing very well, till now (*sic*) at their new posts." But on July 5, 1833, the same Rev. Blanc writes to Rosati, again from New Orleans. "Brassac must go back to his old parish," namely,

<sup>19</sup> It is fairly probable from internal evidence that Brassac during his stay in France wrote the report on the Dioceses of New Orleans and St. Louis printed in the *Annales*, Vol. iii, (September, 1829), pp. 491ff. of which the editor says that it was "furnished by a Louisiana missionary who made a journey to France"? The letter printed *Ibid.*, p. 591 and dated from "Etat du Missouri, September, 1831," and signed "B. . . Miss. Ap.," was written by Rev. John Bouillier.

Donaldsonville. The change must have taken place late in 1833, since the *Catholic Almanac* of 1834 still places Brassac at Baton Rouge. Or were the episcopal chancellors at that early time as late in reporting to the *Catholic Directory* as some of them are now, a hundred years later?

Four years later (1837) Brassac left the American missions and sailed to Europe never to return. What were the reasons? From his letters to his intimate friend, Bishop Rosati, we infer that he feared eventually to get into difficulties with Bishop Blanc, who had always been his friend. So he preferred to leave. But why did he not join St. Louis, where Rosati was bishop? Perhaps out of a delicate consideration for Bishop Blanc. Or did he imagine that in France he might be able to do more for his beloved episcopal friends and their missions in America? Or was it the voice of filial love that called him back to help his old father and his lonely sister? Perhaps all these considerations did work together towards determining his action in returning to France.

For his second journey to Europe Brassac must have left Louisiana in the summer of 1837. His letter to the trustees of Donaldsonville is written from New Orleans, where he probably went to take leave of Bishop Blanc, his Ordinary and friend. He did not embark at New Orleans. It is likely that he went to see his friends at Cincinnati, where he had so many acquaintances, and where he had stopped on his return from Europe six years before. One thing seems certain; he did not wait for Bishop Purcell, who left Cincinnati for Europe in May, 1838, and sailed from New York on June 16. The *Catholic Telegraph* of Cincinnati, for August 23, states among its news that on the New York and Liverpool packet *South America*, Miss Mary Hall, a native of Dublin, died on June 28, fortified by the sacraments of Penance and Extreme Unction, and that Bishop Purcell officiated at her funeral at sea, assisted by the Rev. Messrs. Kenrick, McGill and Vandeweyer. Had Brassac been with them, his name would have been mentioned. One might be inclined to think that Father Brassac accompanied Bishop Blanc from New Orleans, who was expected to stop at Cincinnati on his way to the Third Provincial Council of Baltimore, after Easter, 1837. But Bishop Blanc was present when that Council opened on

April 13, while Brassac was still at New Orleans on April 30. Whether he went to Cincinnati or not, he certainly was in New York by the middle of July. In a letter to Miss M. Reilly, then at St. Joseph's, Emmitsburg, Bishop Purcell writes on July 13, 1837: "I wrote to Mr. Brassac to New York and informed him of your intention to visit Europe. It is possible that he will not sail before the middle of the month or the first of next. I requested him in these latter cases to write to you."

Bishop Purcell landed at Liverpool early in July, 1838, and went to Ireland. After spending some time there, he went to Belgium and thence to France, where he was joined by Father Brassac. On September 12, 1838, Bishop Purcell writes from Paris to Miss Marianne Reilly of Cincinnati: "Mr. Brassac who begs kind and respectful remembrances to yourself and Anna, was with me," when the Bishop visited the Misses Hunter of New York, two converts, who were then at Paris on their way to Rome. Brassac then accompanied the Bishop on his journey through Germany, Austria and Italy. The statement is in the *Berichte der Leopoldinen Stiftung*, that both were in Vienna in December, 1838. In its issue of April 4, 1839, the *Catholic Telegraph* of Cincinnati has a letter from Bishop Purcell describing his journey from Vienna to Bologna in Italy. The letter is dated Bologna, June 20, 1839. There we read: "Mr. Brassac having been seized with a severe attack of rheumatism and a heavy cold, was obliged to keep to his bed for the first day of our sojourn in Venice, and I went alone to the Palace of the Doge." The report of Bishop Purcell's travels in Europe, of his visits in Rome, and of his activities in Paris, where he confirmed repeatedly for the Archbishop, was published in the *Ami de la Religion* and from there copied by the *Catholic Telegraph*, on August 12, 1839. It was apparently written by the bishop's faithful companion, Brassac. Having returned to France, they again visited Belgium. It was on this trip that Bishop Purcell went to the mother-house of the Sisters of Notre Dame at Namur "accompanied by Rev. F. Brassac, his former vicar-general."<sup>20</sup>

After his return to America, Bishop Purcell failed to secure

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<sup>20</sup> This adjective "former" is misleading, since it suggests the idea that Brassac had been Purcell's Vicar General in Cincinnati, which is not the case.

the services of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, and Brassac advised him to apply for the Sisters of Namur, to which the Bishop agreed, authorizing Brassac to engage the Sisters for Cincinnati.<sup>21</sup> Brassac's letter to Mother Ignace at Namur is given in the *Records*,<sup>22</sup> also Purcell's letter to the Bishop of Namur on the same affair. The story of the Sisters' departure for America and the beginnings of their mission at Cincinnati have also been very interestingly told.<sup>23</sup> Brassac assisted them in every way. His vivid account of their embarking in September, 1840 is so characteristic of his amiable and charitable nature and pious disposition, that I cannot resist the temptation of copying here some portions given in the *Records* (l. c., pp. 323 ff). He writes to Mother Ignace as follows:

We have just left the shore, with the tide; our dear daughters (for they are also, in some manner mine, since they are those of the good bishop) have taken possession of their floating house with the calmness and intrepidity of true missionaries. A few moments and we were all on our knees, in a little room, prostrate before the Crucifix and invoking, through the intercession of Her who is truly called, "The Star of the Sea," the protection of Him who commands the winds and the waves. Our hearts were, I assure you, in accordance with our voices, in begging a blessing on our admirable missionaries. They did not leave the harbor until the next morning at low tide. All has gone on admirably, and we have only to bless the Lord for the benediction and graces that He has granted us. Mr. and Mrs. Borée have been admirable to the end, displaying great generosity and an indefatigable complacency.

I have written today to Bishop Purcell to apprise him of all this, and I have written to F. Rappe, both for himself and the Sisters letters which

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<sup>21</sup> See Brassac's letters of October 20, 1839; March 10, April 8 and July 7, 1840, on pp. 456-459.

<sup>22</sup> Vol. xi (1900), p. 321.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 323-27. This article on the *Foundation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in America* naturally suggests the idea that a splendid contribution to the history of the Catholic Church in the United States would be given, if our Sisterhoods especially the older ones, favored the *Catholic Historical Review* with a documentary story of their foundations in our land. Think of the early history here of the Benedictine, Dominican, Franciscan, Ursuline, Vincentian and Visitation Nuns; the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, of St. Joseph, of the Good Shepherd, of Mercy, and of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, not forgetting the Oblates of Providence, and others devoted especially to the moral and religious interests of the colored race. What most interesting and edifying pages might thus be culled from abundant sources undoubtedly hidden away in American and European convents. Our Catholic literature shows that there are fine historic writers among our Sisters. Let them start the good work without delay before precious memories have passed away.

will be useful to them in New York. We have done all in our power to insure the happiness and well-being of those dear children, so we may remain tranquil and feel sure that Providence will supply whatever is wanting to them. . . .

As the wind was calm, in the afternoon, about four o'clock, the pilot at last decided to weigh anchor, and the vessel is abandoned to wind and waves, but above all to Divine Providence, whose arm is not shortened on the broad sea. The Bishop of Ghent was on the shore at the moment of the vessel's departure, and our dear daughters having received his blessing, he remained but a few moments. After this we were alone with our chaplain and our good Father French—we withdrew to a retired part of the deck, where we fell on our knees, and turning towards the tower of Notre Dame, recited the *Veni Creator* and the *Sub Tuum*, then we sang with great feeling the verses of the Cantic: *Je mets ma confiance* . . . In the few words which I addressed to the Sisters, I chose for my text the last words of the hymn: *I would offer my life to gain a soul for God*, and then I gave them my blessing. I have given it, come what may. I bade them a last adieu and I turned my face towards Antwerp, which was a league distant. I followed them with my eyes until the masts were but a speck on the horizon. . . .

Yesterday evening I returned to the ship and presided at the general supper. I chose the places that I thought most convenient for the Sisters and Rev. F. Rappe, leaving the others to arrange themselves as they pleased; it was late when I left. This morning at half past five I returned to those worthy children and we conversed until the afternoon, on subjects from which we could derive spiritual advantage. These dear children had already commenced to work, some were sewing and knitting, others writing and drawing, others again studying, everyone of them calm and peaceful, showing neither enthusiasm nor discouragement. I envied that purity of conscience, that sublimity of sentiment and simplicity of manner so characteristic of those heroines of Faith. God will bless them, do not doubt it, my dear mother, and these blessings will reflect upon you and your worthy counsellors. God will not fail to recompense and protect these young persons so devoted and so generous in His service. I have learned to appreciate the hidden treasures concealed in those eight souls whom Providence has so mercifully chosen for the diocese of my friend, and I thank God for having made me instrumental in bringing about the departure of a colony that inspires me with such ardent hopes. . . .

Bishop Purcell left France in June to return to America, as we learn in one of Father Brassac's letters, written on June 4, 1839.

This is the first letter of a series of some forty letters written by Father Brassac from France to Bishop Purcell in Cincinnati,

covering a space of twenty-two years from 1839 to 1861. Through the kind services of Archbishop Moeller and the skilled assistance of Sister Mary Agnes, of Mt. St. Joseph, in Cincinnati, the historian of her order, and the jealous guardian of these Archives, I am enabled to furnish a number of extracts full of interest and replete with personal and historical items about American and European prelates, the travels of American bishops in Europe, the departure of new missionaries for America, political news, etc. But the main contents are the business transactions of Brassac for Bishop Purcell, especially his endeavors to get large allowances for the Cincinnati Diocese from the Paris Council of the Association of the Propagation of the Faith. In some of these letters Brassac signs himself as "Vicar General of Cincinnati and Nashville." From these letters we can easily form an idea of the man and of his life after his return to France. An alert missionary, still devoting his time and labor to the American mission which he dearly loves; a zealous priest, helping wherever he can in the sacred ministry by preaching and hearing confessions; a pious servant of God, willing at all times to give his best services for the good of the Church wherever they would be required, Brassac appears at the same time to be an enterprising business man, securing whatever help he possibly can for the missions; a loving son to his aged and sickly father and a tender brother to his sister; a true and loving friend to the zealous and energetic bishop of Cincinnati. From these letters we also infer that he must have had a very wide acquaintance with American bishops, priests and laymen. Brassac was well acquainted with Bishops Flaget, Eccleston, Kenrick, Blanc, Portier, Miles, Chanche, Rese, Rappe and de Goesbriand, and with Rev. Deluol, Superior of St. Mary's, Baltimore and his colleague, the Rev. H. Joubert. Brassac usually sends greetings to Rev. Messrs. Collins and Henni, Mr. and Mrs. Springer, the Misses Reilly, the Sisters of Charity, but particularly to Edward, Bishop Purcell's brother, showing that he was well acquainted in Cincinnati. Very often he sends "heartly compliments to our friends, Lamy, Machebeuf, Gacon, Cheymal, Navaron, Clevetti, Manuel and Father Huber." He nearly always sends greetings from his father and sister and from Dr. Nee and family. It is particularly interesting to learn from these letters that Bishop

Purcell proposed Brassac for the Episcopal See of Natchez in 1840; that Bishop Rosati wished Brassac to go with him to the Island of Hayti and San Domingo; that Bishop Kenrick of Philadelphia appointed him his agent in 1840; that Bishop Miles wished Brassac to accompany him to Belgium that same year; and that Brassac was proposed as papal commissary to San Domingo in 1842.

Encouraged by Bishops Rosati, Miles, Portier and Purcell, Father Brassac submitted to the American hierarchy in the summer of 1840, a prospectus for a General Agency in Paris for the transaction of all kinds of American ecclesiastical affairs in Europe. It was established the next year and from May 4, 1841 until November 3, 1842, Brassac's letters bear the following heading: *Agence Ecclésiastique du Clergé Catholique des Etats-Unis d'Amérique.*

The prospectus is a valuable document for the student of the early Catholic American Church History. I give here an English translation of the French original which is in the Mount Saint Joseph Archives. It is accompanied by a letter from Brassac, dated Paris, July 30, 1840.

The need of an Ecclesiastical Agency established in Paris and devoted entirely to the interests of the episcopate and the clergy of the United States has been felt for a long time and yet an establishment of this kind is still wanting.

The undersigned, after having consulted persons of experience, has decided to attempt the enterprise, provided that his plan obtains the approval and encouragement of the archbishops and bishops of the United States, as it has already received it from Bishops Rosati, Portier and Miles. Here is what he has the honor of proposing:

I. The undersigned will act as representative before the Council of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith for the Right Reverend American prelates, who will thus authorize him for the purpose, to explain the needs of the dioceses, to defend their interests, to solicit assistance, to receive the sums allowed and send them to their destination by the surest means and with the shortest delay.

Nearly all the different missions of the world have with the Association a representative in the superiors of the Seminary of the Foreign missions, of the Lazarists, the Jesuits, and the House of Picpus, etc. Those of the United States are almost the only ones which are not officially represented and from this may come the difference in the allocations. In as much as the directors of the Association have no other information about the missions than the letters of the Bishops, which

are often read a long time before the sessions where the allowances are made, the demand made and the considerations to support them are likely to be forgotten, while a few remarks made verbally at that very moment might exert a very happy influence.

The funds allowed to the dioceses of the United States often remain a considerable time in the treasury of the Association. The time necessary to notify the interested parties of these allocations, the sending thereof or possibly the negotiation as to the manner and terms of payments which often follow long after the time when the matter has been presented, cause delays that could to a great extent be avoided by the proposed Agency.

II. Priests in Europe often obtain from their bishops an *exeat* gladly given in order to get rid of them; they arrive in America and the Ordinaries of the place where they present themselves for the missions, have no means of assuring themselves at once of their past conduct and their capabilities. Others again, led undoubtedly by good motives, but having had none to judge their vocations other than persons ignorant of the customs and ways of the United States, find themselves disappointed and unable to do much good. The undersigned will take it upon himself to obtain all possible information about the candidates who present themselves for America. He will try to learn of their character, their talents and their aptitude. As he knows a great number of the Dioceses of France, Belgium, and even Germany and Italy, and as he moreover exercised the holy ministry in the United States for nearly twenty years, he would be better able than many others to judge, with less chances of being mistaken, those who would be fitted for this kind of a mission. He could also provide for their embarkation according to the orders of the bishops.

III. In compliance with the wishes of prelates to obtain the establishment of religious orders of women, the undersigned will attempt to procure them and to attend to everything necessary for their voyage.

IV. The undersigned would also take care of the buying of books, ornaments, sacred vessels, paintings, engravings and lithographs, and Church furniture, also subscriptions to papers and magazines, and in general, of everything that would be recommended to him. He would give his personal attention to these matters, profiting by the assistance of merchants and manufacturers; he would spare no pains in obtaining the most advantageous terms at all times.

V. The undersigned promises to the archbishops and bishops that he will justify their confidence by constant zeal and absolute discretion in the matters entrusted to him.

VI. The undersigned would ask of each of the bishops and archbishops who would honor him with their confidence the sum of \$50.00 (250 francs) as compensation for his services and would pledge himself not to charge any further commissions for the business he would have to do; at least where he would not himself be obliged to pay interest in procuring the drafts for the transmission of moneys.



VII. In cases where the undersigned would be obliged to advance moneys, he would charge at the rate of 5 per cent interest annually and 1 per cent commission on the sum advanced.

VIII. The undersigned will also charge himself to fill the orders given him by colleges, convents, religious institutions and the clergy at large for a reasonable commission according to the importance of the demand; but those orders must be sent to him through the hands of the bishops, or otherwise the money must be sent in advance by draft or otherwise.

IX. The undersigned will give to the archbishops and bishops who desire it, a guarantee for the faithful administration of their funds.

The undersigned feels it his duty to impress upon the archbishops and bishops of the United States that his enterprise is not a money speculation, but simply a work which he believes to be most advantageous for the country that he considers as a second Fatherland.

Bishops Rosati, Portier and Miles have authorized the undersigned to make known to their venerable brothers of the United States the approbation and encouragement which they have given to his project, and to give their names as his reference. He takes the liberty to add the names of Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati, of Mr. Jeanjean of New Orleans, of Madame Gallitzin, Superioress of the Sacred Heart of the United States. The Agency will open on January 1, 1841. Correspondence with the undersigned may be in French or in English. The following form signed and sealed will be a sufficient proxy to authorize the undersigned to act with full power. "I, the undersigned, Archbishop (or Bishop) of N. N. in the United States of America, recognize and authorize Monsieur l'Abbé Brassac, formerly missionary in America, as my agent with the Association for the Propagation of the Faith established in Europe, and I ask all persons whom it may concern to honor him in this quality with their confidence."

I have the honor to remain, most respectfully of Your Grace, the most humble and devoted servant,

H. BRASSAC,

Paris,  
Rue Cassette 28.

V. G. of Cincinnati and Nashville.

P. S.—There will always be with this agent an apartment for the Archbishops and Bishops during their stay at Paris.

I am unable to find any information of the work this Agency accomplished. Two other questions arise in this connection. Keeping in mind Brassac's deep interest in the American missions and his intimate acquaintance with so many of the Bishops and priests, especially in the South, one would naturally infer that there must have been a wide and lively correspondence between Brassac and the American prelates and clergy. May not some very interesting letters be stored away in the Episcopal

Archives of New Orleans, St. Louis, Bardstown, Mobile, Nashville, Natchez and Buffalo? What, on the other hand has become of Brassac's own correspondence of a hundred or more letters which came to him from America?<sup>24</sup>

From the later letters of Father Brassac, it is evident that for a time a coldness overshadowed his relations with Bishop Purcell, who seemed not to have been able to overcome a certain resentment against Brassac caused by false reports made to him in 1845. However, the fact that Bishop Purcell kept all these letters so carefully, shows conclusively that the bond of friendship was never entirely broken. In fact, that perfect harmony was restored between the two friends is evident by the cordial accent and soft ring of Brassac's last letter to Bishop Purcell. The cloud which for a time had veiled their friendship did pass away, as Brassac had foretold in his letter of November 13, 1844. Of his last years, we know nothing. From his last letter to Bishop Purcell in 1861, it would seem that Brassac finally had his cherished wish fulfilled, namely, to spend his last days in the quiet solitude of Marvéjols. Presuming that he was at least twenty-three years old, when ordained at St. Genevieve in 1818, he was sixty-six when this letter was written in 1861. Where did he die? Where is his grave to be sought? These questions may be answered, I trust, when the sun of peace again shines brightly over Brassac's home in the valley of Marvéjols and among the hills of Lozère.

✦ SEBASTIAN G. MESSMER,  
*Archbishop of Milwaukee.*

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<sup>24</sup> There are several hundred letters by Rosati, Blanc, Brassac, Jeanjean, Anduze and other pioneer missionaries still preserved in the Archives of St. Louis and at the Kenrick Seminary.